

Lent 1
3/6/2022

RESPONSIBILITIES

There's something invisible but real that we all possess: Invisible, real and very important. We call it responsibility. We all have a responsibility to properly use that which has been entrusted to us. Everyday we in the news we hear about people in the world and also in the Church who failed to act properly with the responsibility that had been entrusted to them.

In the gospel, we find Jesus spending time in the desert. The desert is a geographic space but it's also a spiritual space. The desert is a place set apart, a place with less distractions, a place that gives people time to ponder and to pray but the desert can also be a place of temptation.

The gospel describes three temptations that Jesus faced but you could say that these are reduced to one: to misuse the authority that had been entrusted to him. Jesus comes to reveal and to save. To reveal God to humanity but also to reveal to humanity what it means to be human. He comes to save us through his death and resurrection. Knowing what his mission is allows Jesus to reject false understandings of being a messiah, of the human person and even of God. Jesus' mission as messiah, isn't to do tricks or gain worldly power and our value comes from who we are and not from what we have. And it certainly wasn't Jesus' mission to worship the evil one, which is to have a false understanding of God.

Jesus' time of temptation reminds us that in our lives there *will be* times of temptation. Times that will try to draw us, even with what appears to be good, into a false understanding of Jesus, of who we are and even who God is. Times that will tempt us to misuse what has been entrusted to us. And the first step in overcoming a temptation is to know that it exists.

In life there are big temptations and smaller and more subtle temptations. The large ones are of course more serious but they can be more rare. Small temptations can happen more frequently and ultimately lead us into larger temptations. These can be dangerous because they seem so small. Just as we seek to do good in every little way,

so too, we can be tempted to do evil in every little way. It can be a temptation to feel sorry for ourselves and to complain. There are two parts to maturity. One is to do what needs to be done and the second is to not complain about it. Sometimes number two can be harder than number one.

There's the temptation to hold onto grudges and resentments. To do that is like holding our hands cupped with poison. Resentment doesn't make us better, it makes us bitter. It may be the temptation to be mediocre—to just get by. To be good enough to stay out of big trouble but not committed enough to Christ to where it really makes a difference in how we live.

It's the temptation to simply fly below the radar, to do the minimum but nothing more, to do things always out of duty and never out of love. Imagine a husband or wife saying to the other, *Just tell me the minimum I have to do and I will do it.* Hopefully there aren't many spouses that say that but it can be a work in our faith life. Love doesn't have much need for minimalism. Our faith isn't meant to be a shiny decoration on the ship of our lives but rather the rudder that gives us direction. Jesus calls us to many things but mediocrity isn't one of them. Jesus didn't try to get by doing as little as possible. He gave his all and here in the Eucharist, he continues to give his all to us and invites us to give our all to him. This Lent prayerfully consider, *What's a big temptation in my life right now and what's a small one? And what do I need to do about it?*

Every temptation is an invitation and every occasion of sin is also an occasion of grace. A temptation to cheat on your taxes is an invitation to grow in honesty. A temptation to cheat on your spouse is an invitation to grow in fidelity. A temptation to gossip is an invitation to grow in respect of other people. A temptation to leave Mass after Communion is an invitation to grow in love for the Eucharist. We face all these temptations with Jesus, as members of his body the Church, strengthened by prayer, fortified by the word of God and by worthily sharing in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist where Jesus continues to nourish us with himself.

At Easter when we renew our baptismal promises, we will be asked to re-reject the lure of evil and of Satan who is the father of lies. We will be asked to re-profess our faith in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead. We prepare for this by

examining the temptations we face in our own lives, large and small, including the temptation to be mediocre. With God's grace, we respond by realizing that every temptation is also an invitation. With God's grace, may we always be faithful to the responsibilities entrusted to us.